

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

ENGINEERING DIRECTIVE

FROM:

[Signature]
Chief Engineer
SUPERSEDED

DESIGNING FOR HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY

The following sets guidelines for designers. The rules and regulations of the Architectural Access Board (AAB) govern.

Department experience has shown certain repeat infractions. For instance:

1. Sidewalk cross slopes pitch too steeply at drives. The law requires a path of travel 3' or more in width pitching at 2% or less.
2. Wheel chair ramps steeper than the 1:12 allowed. One cause, among others, is failure to take into account profile grades and specify clearly required lengths of transition curb.
3. Designs which cannot be fitted to field conditions without breaching AAB regulations. In CBD's, for example, resident engineers cannot keep sidewalk cross slope at 2% or less and meet existing doorsteps, thresholds etc.

The AAB can grant variances on the ground of impracticability. Precedents demonstrate that for good cause shown, AAB does grant such variances. Filing for a variance is a strict procedural requirement.

Many sidewalks at drives cannot be built with 2% or less cross slope. The drives are too steep or otherwise not adaptable. Sidewalks in CBD's and elsewhere often pose impossible problems, as noted above. These difficulties should not be passed on to resident engineers. Designers should examine drive profiles and elevations at abutting buildings to see whether variances need to be filed.

This directive calls for heightened awareness. It intends that field problems be anticipated and variances obtained up front on a job by job basis.

Please be guided accordingly and direct design consultants under contract to us to do the same.